

CONTROVERSIAL.

"THE AGITATION OF THOUGHT IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM."

The Editors reserve the right to erase all improper personalities and objectionable expressions found in any article accepted for this department; and they alone shall be the judges.

Convention or No Convention.

BY E. S. MILLER.

Is there any need for one? Any important general church work that demands the attention of the Brotherhood at this time? Is the cause of Jesus languishing anywhere in this broad land of ours, for want of effectual, well-organized forces at work? Having recently read in the EVANGELIST several well-directed pleas, favoring the call of a convention I have concluded to continue that plea. It does seem to me the demand is imperative. The church needs reinforcement. It needs inspiration. It needs concentration of God-given power. It needs development of latent forces that must be utilized. Too many of the available elements of usefulness lie dormant.

If Sunday school conventions are a good thing for the promotion of Sunday school work, (and I believe they are,) then a church convention for general church work is a good thing to have. The former we have annually in different localities, the latter when urgent necessity demands it. Is there not now an important problem to solve? How to supply the constant demand for the preaching of the Gospel by the Brethren in new fields, whence the Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us," like a mournful dirge, is coming from waste places, constantly appealing to our sympathies. We know that something ought to be done. We have now the Brethren church out of the wilderness "as a root out of dry ground without form or comeliness" at the first, but bringing with her intact all the essential doctrines of the whole Gospel, and the Gospel only, in all matters of Christian life and salvation as held by the church of the Brethren in her primitive times before eldercraft began to darken council. As the church we have the name given to us by our recognized Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and for our creed the New Testament scriptures, given to us by the Master Himself. We came from the conflict of forty-six years with the trophy—the name and the creed—handed down to us from Heaven, shall we not take pleasure as the church to go forth conquering and to conquer, until she shall shine forth "bright as the morn, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" In the strength of the God of Israel let us now, since out of captivity, go forth, keeping in view only the glory of God. Pardon this digression. It is asserted above, something ought to be done. Something must be done. Something by the grace of God may, indeed can, yes, will be done, with the Christ as Head over all things to the church. Now, come, let us reason together, in our families, in our social meeting of song, prayer and praise, in our church business meetings, and in convention assembled as ministers and laymen, how to meet the demand of the times for Christian missions.

Is there not any amount of native ability that needs encouragement and fostering? Is there not much moderately cultured talent in the church that needs to be called into requisition? Why are gifted, educated, young ministers among us, permitted to drift away from the arena of hard work in the field into isolation in unsettled territories to drudge and toil as pioneers of a new country, eking out the very stamina of their physical being for a livelihood? Why let our young brethren of literary training who show a good degree of aptness to teach in spiritual things wander off into the secular professions of the day? First, for the love they have to help save souls, and then, secondly, because the ministry is not financially an unrequited drudgery, but because the laborer in that calling in our fraternity is cared for as the Gospel we profess teaches, we shall have new recruits that shall make it count for Jesus and the enlarging of the kingdom.

The harvest truly is great but the laborers are few. Shall we not "pray the Lord of the harvest to send us more laborers?" At the same time look out among our membership for such brethren as may be made useful and efficient in the ministry. Let the motion for a convention be seconded by many through the EVANGELIST, and at the same time let each brother and sister help make the program of work for that convention, confining your suggestions only to such business as will contribute towards making us as a church, aggressive upon the strongholds of sin and error, and progressive in the furtherance of the cause of Christ by doing "O man, what is good," and what the Lord doth require of thee. "To love mercy and to do justly, and to walk humbly with thy God." I give my voice for a convention in the near future.—Dayton, Ohio.

The Restless Soul.

BY J. H. WORST.

The world is large and its conditions various. Wander whither we may, by the ocean's strand, in the untamed wilderness, on the open prairie or among the mountain peaks, there is still a void, an aching unrest that creeps over the soul. Imagination may soar up among the untenanted clouds that hang like a wonderland above the horizon, or even venture among the more distant stars; still the shadows linger. The mind of man is far reaching but is bounded still by the near shore line of ignorance. In vain the soul may pant for deliverance and freedom, to revel in the garden of knowledge, but like the encaged bird its flutterings only reveal its weakness. 'Tis well. Slavery must precede liberty or freedom itself would have no virtue. The champions of liberty always received their inspiration from the manacles they wore. Ignorance is the most galling slavery that ever smote the heart of man, and yet it has its champions, for the bliss of not knowing, to many, is felicity. There are things of momentous interest overhanging us that we are not brave enough to know if we could, and yet because we dare not and cannot we are gloomy. The uncertainty of life, the pangs of death, the separation of friends, the mysterious future, all mock us. Die we must, but—when? After death—what? What the final outcome of this busy, studious, laborious, ambitious life? Is ambition a cheat? Did Lilly speak truthfully when he said:

"Ambition hath one heel nail'd in hell
Though she stretch her fingers to touch the heavens?"
Or shall we take the advice of Shakespere and
"Banish the canker of ambitious thoughts?"

Will the mediocre plodding through the world without a thought or care for the future snatch the prize from self-made genius? The mind trained to think and by thinking thrills the millions, only to hide its misery behind their joy. The power to thus unearth pleasing wonders for the gaping multitude retains the power to expose to itself its own emptiness. The world looks and wonders when the flashings of genius crowd the mirror, little dreaming that the real actor is dying behind the scenes. Dying of what? of gratification? No. Of mortification. The power to dazzle the world's eye and brain, if real, is power sufficient to expose to the actor's soul its real shallowness, and the unthinking applause aggravates rather than animates. The applauding multitudes little appreciate the conflict raging in the actor's breast. He has reached the goal of popular applause only to be disgusted with himself and intensely disgusted with his admirers. In his heart he thought there was reality where there is none, and the short-sightedness of the world is aggravating. Thus it is. No personal gratification. Wealth will not satisfy the miser; honor will not satisfy the ambitious, learning will not satisfy the student, nor skill the physician. Each upward step only widens the horizon of each and places the goal farther beyond. When the world applauds them as crowned with success, they know the crown is further away than at the beginning. They know also by this time how easy it becomes to hoodwink the thoughtless, and too often they commit suicide to honorable motives, and float lazily through life upon the shallow sea of appearances. Modern greatness consists mainly in deceiving the people. If the bubble of their superiority could be pricked it would be to true genius what a Chinese fort is to a genuine fortress. The Chinese fort alluded to was painted on canvass and stretched upon the bank, and is said to have scared a large gunboat beyond its range. So false genius only scares; but where is the gratification? Deception cannot be gratifying. Genius carries too heavy a load to insure comfort.

Where then is the true goal? Is it not in hope? When the soul is shadowed in gloom may it not hope for a brighter day beyond? May not this terrible ignorance be but the harbinger of knowledge when "we shall know as we are known?" Is not this unrest, this unappeased ambition but the germ of rest and complete gratification in heaven? If there are many hungerings and thirstings that earth cannot appease may we not look to the life beyond for perfect bliss? Earth can only expand the faculty, not gratify it. Gratification is retained for a heaven. Earth must make heaven

possible; from its depths we build the shaft that pierces the dome beyond. "The baseless fabric" of imposture will crumble beneath the first shock of purification that shall sift the world. The true and pure shall endure, and their builders can afford to wait.—Williamsport, Dakota.

Day of Days.

BY C. H. BALSBAUGH.

To an Octogenarian:

Seven days hence will be the solemn anniversary of the great mystery of Godliness, the Incarnation of the eternal Word. I do not want to let the occasion pass without giving you another hearty Christian greeting. It may be the last salutation for this day of love on this side the vale. You have seen many returns of the Nativity, and in a few days you will be in a blissful realization of what it all means. Here we see through a glass darkly, then face to face. Let us spend the holy day as if we were already with the glorified Emmanuel, in truthful, appropriating fellowship. May we be so meek, so empty of self, so full of faith and the Holy Ghost, that Acts 7:56, may be to us a living, beautiful reality. Such an experience is by no means impossible. If we always lived in the exalted privileges and consciousness of our high calling, we would enjoy more of the fulfillment of John 1:51. We know, we confess, we feel, that in our flesh dwelleth nothing good, but we triumph in the sweet, blessed and amazing truth that God Himself was made flesh. In Him our flesh is conquered, and our faith in that conquest gives us the victory over the world the flesh and the devil. O, what a redemption! The saint has heaven by anticipation, and the full fruition forever and ever. Our tears all taste of heaven. Our sighs have all an undertone of the celestial melody. All Christian tears will be transmuted into pearls and sparkle in the crown of glory. The more we shed the greater will be our treasure and rapture and brightness in the wonderful hereafter. Jesus knew full well what he was saying when He encouraged and comforted His disciples with these words: "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Believe in God and believe in Me as God manifest in the flesh." John 14:1, 27. Picture Jesus standing before you, smiling into your eyes and into your soul, and repeating the same words to you. They are meant for you. Faith brings Him very near, and makes Him more real to the soul than natural objects are to the body. I wish you just such a Christmas, a living, present Jesus filling your heart with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And I believe such a blessing will be yours. Jesus never withholds himself from the heart that wholly trusts Him. But we must commit all into His omniscient omnipotent providence. "As Thou wilt," must always be on our tongue and in our heart. A perfect trust has glorious promise and all its promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. We look back over our imperfect, broken, unworthy life and we sing, Rev. 1:5, 6. We look forward to the dissolution of body and soul and still sing in faith and hope, 1 Cor. 15:55. And beyond that it will be an everlasting song, with not a sad or discordant note in it. And this will be yours, and soon, through Jesus our eternal Bridegroom. A happy, happy Christmas, forevermore.

If You Please.

The correspondents of our EVANGELIST seem to be quite startled of late at the editorials of the Gospel Messenger, and take occasion to criticize. The editorials in question deserve criticism no doubt. But, at the same time, they (the editorials,) are so obscure and admit of so many different constructions and interpretations when viewed in the light of surrounding circumstances that they are of little value to us as readers. Our minds, perhaps, are too small to arrive at any definite conclusion, and we are only distressed at what seems so absurd and inconsistent under the circumstances even if true.

Brother Yoder in his reviews and interrogatories addressed to the Messenger people, puts the matter in quite clearly and when he receives an answer directly to the point and not evasive and obscure I should be pleased to see it published. Until then, excuse us, if you please. J. J. LIGHTY.
Morrill, Kans., Dec. 28, 1884.